






Session One Summary:

Community-based Social Marketing: Selecting Behaviors and Identifying Campaign Goals | January 17, 2025

Behavior change

Community-based social marketing (CBSM) offers an **alternative to the knowledge-deficit approach**, which assumes that behavior change occurs simply by increasing awareness or knowledge about a subject. In practice, this approach often fails to provide actionable takeaways and is not effective at driving behavior change. In contrast, CBSM focuses on creating tailored, community-level interventions. This means the information and behavior changes being promoted are uniquely adapted to the target audience. CBSM follows a pragmatic, five-step process designed to facilitate sustainable behavior change in realistic and practical ways:

	Select a behavior to promote Choose a behavior that is both realistic and achievable for your target audience. It should also have low penetration, meaning not many people are currently engaging in it, leaving room for improvement.
	Identify benefits and constraints Use surveys, interviews, or other methods (described below) to understand what motivates your audience and what obstacles prevent them from adopting the desired behavior.
	Develop a strategy Develop a strategy grounded in social science to reduce constraints and promote benefits. The seven strategies outlined in the framework can be used either independently or together.
	Pilot the strategy Test your approach on a small scale to identify lessons learned, areas of improvement, and anecdotal evidence of behavior change.
	Implement broadly and evaluate Refine the campaign based on the pilot results, then implement it on a larger scale and evaluate its success.

CBSM is more than just outreach. It combines scientific rigor with principles from social science, marketing, and psychology to better understand and **change behavior in meaningful ways**.

Selecting a behavior to promote

Consider the following guidelines for identifying a target behavior to change:

- **Determine a disturbance behavior:** Focus on behaviors that are having the greatest negative impact on your area of interest
- **Identify alternative actions:** Select behaviors that are both worthwhile to promote and likely to be adopted by your target audience
- **Avoid non-divisible behaviors:** Ensure the actions are straightforward and simple, without being broken into smaller, separate actions or interpretations
- **Focus on end-state behaviors:** Choose behaviors that directly contribute to achieving your desired outcome or goal.

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Understand your audience

Your strategies and messages should be **tailored to the benefits and constraints your audience associates with the behavior**. Continuously refer to the table below as you develop your campaign targeted towards dog walkers or beach walkers.

Dog walkers		Beach walkers	
Benefits to leashing dogs on the beach	Constraints to leashing dogs on the beach	Benefits to walking around flocks	Constraints to walking around flocks
Preventing dogs from running into areas for beach-nesting birds	Reduced socialization for dogs	Watching shorebirds in their natural state	Physical environment and space limitations
Increased safety for dogs	Reduced exercise for dogs	Avoiding bird aggression	Low awareness of coastal birds
Increased control by dog walkers	Disbelief that there is a need to leash dogs (respond well to commands)	Avoiding bird defecation	Convenience of walking through flocks
Keeping dogs away from other people			

If you need to identify benefits and constraints **for a different behavior, disturbance type, or audience**, but have limited time and resources, consider the following approaches:

- Engage in informal conversations with your target audience
- Review examples of other programs with similar goals
- Conduct a literature review
- Observe people's behavior on the beach
- Discuss with a group of partners

Additionally, you can put yourself in your audience's mindset to better understand their perspectives. To do so, refer to the diagram below:

Get in the Headspace of Your Target Audience...








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Communication best practices

Finally, ensure your communication aligns with your audience's values. Here are some best practices to follow:

	Emphasize what matters to the audience Use the benefits and constraints perceived by the audience as guidance to focus your message on what they care about most.
	Make your ask clear Clearly state the behavior or action you want them to take.
	Foster a positive connection Help the audience feel a meaningful, positive link to the subject. Avoid negative framing.
	Leverage social norms Align your messaging with values and behaviors already important to the audience.
	Keep it simple Use short, straightforward messages and prompts. Less is more.

Remember, **not everyone will respond to or interpret information in the same way**. Tailor your messaging to what resonates most with your audience, and **prepare a variety of messages that convey the same core message** to reach different perspectives effectively.

Relevant resources

Check out the [Shorebird Disturbance Reduction Toolkit](#) for more information on the collaborative human disturbance project and CBSM:

- The [Methods tab](#) gives a quick overview of each step of CBSM
- Under the [Implementation tab](#), you review content about selecting a behavior and identifying benefits and constraints
- You can also view the [toolkit webinar](#) for more information on how to navigate the website

Additionally, view the [Guide to Applying Science and Management Insights and Human Behavior Change Strategies to Address Beach Walking and Dog Disturbance Along the Atlantic Flyway](#) for detailed information on how to apply CBSM to disturbance by beach walkers and dog walkers:

- Content on CBSM can be found on pages 8-25
- For more detailed information on the benefits and constraints to voluntarily leashing dogs, see page 24
- For more detailed information on the benefits and constraints to voluntarily walking around flocks of shorebirds, see page 25